

# Peasant Movement in North East India

(1946-1950)



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*Dedicated to  
the Memory of those peasants who  
sacrificed their today for  
better Tomorrow of their Fraternity*

## Foreword

The peasants in Colonial India suffered the cruel extortions of the feudal gentry who enjoyed the protection of the British Raj. Nevertheless, these exploited peasants took up arms to give expression to the grievances of their miseries against the feudo-colonial combine, first, through a series of sporadic upsurges and, then, organised and sustained movements. In the latter phase, the peasant mobilisation merged into the mainstream of the national movement under the leadership of the Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party of India. Tebhaga falls in the second category, though it occurred in the years of decolonisation, when the country was on the threshold of independence, and it continued for sometimes after the transfer of power to enforce reforms in the feudo-colonial pattern of landholdings. The movement was essentially a series of organised peasant protests in Bengal and the Bengalee dominated districts of Assam to secure a higher quantum of share to the peasants of the yields of their labour. Tebhaga or the movement for two-thirds of the yields started in the northern districts of Bengal and gradually spread to the eastern districts of the province. Thereafter, the peasants in the Bengalee districts of Assam, namely, Sylhet, Cachar and Goalpara were also encouraged by the nationalist leaders to agitate on local issues. In Cachar, the demand for two-thirds took a militant form and some peasants laid their lives for the cause of tebhaga. In this district, the movement continued even after the transfer of power, at least for three more years.

Although the tebhaga movement in Bengal has been studied by some scholars as part of the history of peasant movements in the province, the same movement in Assam and the North East did not receive our adequate attention. Dr. Girban

Ranjan Biswas has done a great service to the academia by drawing our attention to the impact of the Tebhaga Movement in this part of the country and by retrieving the hidden deeds of tebhaga activists in North East India in all its nuances and ramifications. His study is based on original documents which have been preserved in various archives and records branches as well as the additional information gathered through his interactions with the participants of the movement. Equally significant is his focus on the tebhaga in the context of peasant situation in Colonial India and the land-man relations in local conditions. I am confident that this excellent monograph bridges an important gap in our current knowledge of the peasant history of India.

Assam University  
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J.B. BHATTACHARJEE

## Acknowledgements

The present work is a revised version of my Doctoral Thesis submitted to the Assam University, Silchar. In this volume I have made an humble attempt to bring to light the nature of peasant protest in this part of North-East India. And for that I have taken oral evidence by way of interview of peasant activists and leaders at the time of the field work. I have been enlightened by them not only about peasant protest but also about various facts of rural life and the behaviour of peasants. I must express indebtedness to all of them but for whose help it would not have become possible to unearth the entire historical facts.

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No research work speaks the last word. I am responsible for all the omissions, if any, and I indulge the cravings of all to excuse me for the lapses which are not done consciously.

GIRBAN R. BISWAS

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## Introduction

The weakening of the authority of the centralised Mughal State was compounded by serious economic crisis. It was further precipitated by the tendency of the Mughal *zamindars* and *jagirdars* to acquire massive wealth from land revenue collection through the *ijaradari* system, it resulted in the plunder of the countryside. This loot continued and even perpetrated after the East India Company took over the revenue administration. From Permanent settlement to Ryotwari and Mahalwari settlements, the principal motive behind those settlements was maximisation of revenue. No wonder, the sector which was most affected by the character of colonial rule, was agriculture. Even before the formal take over in 1858, Bengal was reeling under pressure of the colonial state to produce more revenue. It resulted not only in thorough transformation of agricultural sector but also reduced many a peasant to mere cultivators, who vented their anger and impoverishment through a series of resistance movements. In fact, the formative years of the colonial rule in India was ruptured again and again by these frequent and sporadic uprisings of the peasant and tribal cultivators. From 1763 to 1856 there were more than forty rebellions apart from hundreds of minor upsurges. There was hardly a year without one armed opposition or other. Displaced peasants and demobilised soldiers and dispossessed *zamindars* led by monks were one of the first to take up arms against the alien rulers. These uprisings are known as sanyasin rebellion immortalised by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in his famous *Anandmath*, lasted from 1763 to 1800 and followed by Chuar uprising of 1766–1772, covering five districts of Bengal and Bihar. It broke out again during 1765–1816. Other major rebellions of Eastern

India are those of Rangpur and Dinajpur (1783), Bishnupur and Birbhum (1799), Orissa Zamindar (1804-1817) and Sambalpur (1822-1840). In South India, the Raja of Vijaynagaram revolted in 1794, the Poligars of Tamilnadu in 1790, the Poligars of Malabar and Coastal Andhra in the first decade of the 19th century. Dewan Velu Thampi of Travancore organised a heroic revolt in 1805. The Mysore peasant revolted in 1830-31. There were major uprisings in Vishakhapatnam in 1830-34, Ganjam in 1835 and Karnool in 1846-47.

Assam also did not lag behind. The reason is not far to seek. It has been rightly remarked, "the land revenue policy in Assam produced the severest strain on the peasant economy in Assam."<sup>1</sup> The British by adhering to their colonial policy made the position of the peasants of Assam such that they had to surrender to the state a large proportion of their agricultural output than peasants in other parts of Eastern India and they suffered all the greater till about the end of the 19th century because of certain development in the economy.<sup>2</sup> In course of time the patience of the peasants of Assam reached beyond toleration. The result was a popular upsurge which became well-known as the Phulguri Dhawa (battle of Phulguri) of 1861 and this was followed by a series of peasant revolts in Rangia and Patharughat in 1893-94.

In Western India chiefs of Saurashtra revolted in 1816-30, Kolis of Gujarat in 1824-28 and again in 1839 and 1849. In fact, Maharashtra was in perpetual state of revolt after the final defeat of Peshwa. Prominent among them were the Bhil uprising (1818-1831), the Kittur uprising (1824) led by Chinava, the Satava uprising (1844).

Northern India was no less turbulent. The Western UP and Haryana peasants, rose up to arms in 1824, and the Bilaspur peasants in 1805, Talluqdars of Aligarh in 1814-17, the Bundels of Jabalpur in 1842 and of Kandesh in 1852. Among the tribal uprisings of Santhals who rose in 1854-60 was most intensive. The Kols of Chhotanagpur revolted in 1820-27 and the uprising of Birsa Munda took place in 1899-1900. In two decades since the World War of 1914-18, the peasant unrest, "advanced at a speed without previous parallel and raked on a more and more clearly revolutionary character. The world economic

crisis knocked at the bottom out of the already exhausted agrarian economy of India. The resulting process of rack-renting, debt enslavement and expropriation found its reflection in rising movements of the peasants in all parts of India".<sup>3</sup>

1936 witnessed the organisational efforts to co-ordinated peasant movements. It manifested in the formation of All India Kisan Sabha. The period of 1942-45 was a period of great trial of kisan movement. "The whole period is full of glorious achievements of kisans of India. Thousands and thousands of acres of fallow lands are brought under cultivation in Andhra. The kisans themselves got together, built huge dams and saved big tracts of land from being devastated by flood. In Bengal even during the worst days of famines, the kisans in most of the villages in surplus area got together, pooled their entire stock and sent the village surplus to their starving brothers in different districts".<sup>4</sup> But as far as the peasant movement is concerned, it was on a low ebb, during this period. The nationalist leaders refused to mobilise the rebellious peasantry who were ready for a violent show down with the colonial state on the aftermath of August 1942. As a result, the moral of the peasants dipped down and the communist led Kisan Sabha also did not organise any militant struggle during the people's war phase. But in the winter of 1946, the peasant struggle erupted like a volcano, millions of tenants and agricultural labourer were mobilised in *tebhaga* and *tanka* struggle in Bengal. Communist cadres including many urban student militants who went out into the countryside to organise *bargadars* who had become a major and growing section of the rural population as poor peasants lost lands through depression and famine and were pushed down to the level of share-croppers. They numbered 60% of villagers in some pockets which became *tebhaga* strongholds at a later date.

In Talengana armed struggle, in the revolt of Warli of Maharashtra, in the second wave of Ba-kasht struggle in Bihar, Dhenkanal movement in Orissa and the militant peasant struggle in UP and Patiala, the situation was so grave that, according to Sumit Sarkar, it created a major pressure from below through the British to quit India.

## Historiography

Although India has a rich history of peasant resistance, Indian historians had been until recently shy of recording their role in making of Indian nation. In fact, Indian peasants, to use Ranajit Guha's words, "denied recognition as subject of history in his own rights".<sup>5</sup> Truly speaking the identity of Indian nation is unthinkable without the contribution of the peasant struggle to it. These struggles formed an integral part of the Indian freedom movement. The colonial state termed these movements as insurgency and rebellions. The colonial historians leveled these movements as backward looking, unprogressive and blind-hitting out of a people enslaved by premordialism or superstitious consciousness while the neo-colonialist viewed the peasant movements as a handiwork of the sub-contractors. Sometimes these revolts were seen as machinations of the rich peasantry to whom the poorer peasants were subordinated by factions or bonds of clientele like share-cropping, money-lending and tenancy. The Naxalite movement in late 60s led to revival of interest in the peasant movement in India. In 1974, Katheline Gough wrote an inspiring article on Indian peasant uprising and showed that India has rich history of peasant struggle, of which Naxalite movement was only a continuation. Gough has recently compiled a list of 77 peasant uprisings involving violence for the entire British period and classified them under five types viz., restorative, religious, social banditry, terrorist vengeance and armed insurrection. 1857 might be regarded as the culmination of the older type of anti-British resistance, led by dispossessed chiefs and with restorative aims. Dhanagire studied the peasant movements from Mophla to Telengana in his *Peasant Movement in India*, A.R. Desai edited a volume entitled, *Peasant Struggle in India*, covering a long period and unearthing massive materials. Sunil Sen's *Agrarian Struggles in Bengal* followed by *Peasant Movement in India*, covered the entire 19th and 20th century peasant movements. In 1983, a path-breaking study of the structure of peasant resistance in 19th century India was published by Ranajit Guha (Elementary aspect of peasant insurgency in Colonial India.) Following this, a group of scholars gathered round him to establish

a new historiographical school called, 'Subaltern School'. This school used the Gramscian concept, Subaltern as a blanket term to cover the lower echelons and non-mainstream classes of the society. It tried to attract our attention to unorganised peasant initiative to resist colonial and class oppressions. It showed that there were two domains of politics in Colonial India: Elite and Subaltern. In the elite domains, their scramble for power and privileges were confined to the legal and political limits prescribed by the colonial state. Hence, their mobilisation too was from the above i.e., verticals. In contrast, the subaltern movements were autonomous and based on traditional organisation and kinship or caste organisation depending on the level of consciousness. Thus, its mobilisation is horizontal.

### Tebhaga

Of all the peasant movements listed above tebhaga was one of the most important along with INA, RIN mutiny, Punnapravaylar movement in Travancore and Telengana peasant armed revolt in Hyderabad. Tebhaga in Bengal offered the most formidable blow to the foundation of the colonial state and hastened up the British withdrawal from India. Needless to say, its importance could never be undermined. The importance of tebhaga lies in the fact that it was the first politically organised mass peasant movement led by the communist party as well as the kisan sabha. Till tebhaga most of the peasant movements were organised as part of the nationalist struggle. Even those which were not organised as part of the nationalist movement were at least inspired by it. The post Second World War economic crisis had compelled the peasants to mobilise themselves. The Bengal peasantry had been fighting for the largest share. In September 1946, the Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha gave a call to implement, through a mass struggle, the Flood Commission's recommendation of tebhaga i.e., two-third share of the crop, instead of half, even less, for the share-cropper on land rented from *Jotedars*. The movement caught on suddenly from harvest time in November with the central slogan *Nij Khamare Dhan Tolo* (share-croppers taking paddy to their threshing floor and not to the *jotedar's* house).

The movement immediately appeared in 19 districts of Bengal. The Statesman, which covered the events, said, "dumbed through the past centuries he is today transformed by a shout of slogan. It is inspiring to see him marching across a field with his fellows each shouldering a *lathi* like rifle with a red flag at the head of the procession".<sup>6</sup> In certain pockets of Midnapur the *tebhaga* activists declared themselves independent thereby sending danger signal to the colonial state. Even though the movement did not take any violent turn, the intensity of the movement compelled the frightened *Jotedars* to leave the area. Understandably, the movement was against the *Jotedars* and not the colonial state, it was intense enough for the British to panic. Even the Indian National Congress in Faizpur session in 1937 demanded for a 50% reduction in land revenue and rent, a moratorium on debts, the abolition of feudal levies, security of tenure for tenants, a living wage for agricultural labourer and the recognition of peasant union. But when the question for any militant peasant movement came up, the National Congress always maintained a dubious attitude as far as the peasant movement for establishment of their rightful place in the society was concerned and was alarmed by the power of the *tebhaga* movement.

Like most successful movements in Indian history, *tebhaga* also had a spread which even its organisers failed to record. The course of *tebhaga* which is known to have erupted in North Bengal and then spread to certain parts of Eastern Bengal has not been properly recorded by the chroniclers of the movement. What was not known till recently is that *tebhaga* also had erupted with equal intensity and perhaps for longer period than Bengal in certain parts of North East India like Goalpara and Cachar. Surprisingly, that the *tebhaga* had taken place in this part of India has not only escaped attention of historians but even the organisers of the movement—the Communist party of India. Along with the *tebhaga* movement, *Tanka* movement of the Hajong tribe of North Maymensingh took a militant turn in the Maymensingh district. The *Tanka* movement was more militant than *tebhaga* but confined in a small pocket. This movement which had grass root support and organisation could not withstand the repression of the state as

it was limited to insignificant ethnic minority community's movement. Like tebhaga, this movement also did not receive the attention of the historians. The lack of authoritative and objective work on the movement especially in English is a great hindrance to its proper evaluation.

As already mentioned, tebhaga was considered as a Bengal phenomenon only. However, a closure search by the researchers has revealed that it was not actually so. The communist activities had already started in the Surma Valley (Sylhet and Cachar) in 1930s. The kisan sabha had been established in 1937. As a part of the Surma Valley, Cachar had become an important centre for Kisan Sabha activists. Prominent kisan sabha leaders in the region were Irabat Singh, Dwijen Sengupta, Sitaram Baroi, Bhagirath Singh, Jiban Banerjee, Motilal Jagirdar, Mrinal Dasgupta, Achinta Bhattacharjee, Manindra Burman, Moni Roy, Gopen Roy and others.

Inspired by the theory of tebhaga and its immense success in Bengal, these activists mobilised the peasants of Cachar. The movement caught the fancy of the peasants and *bhagchasi* and immediately took a militant turn resulting in the death of some peasant in the police firing.

In this work our effort is to reconstruct the story of tebhaga that took place in Cachar and then integrate it with the tebhaga movement in Bengal. We shall also try to study the land tenure system of Cachar to provide the backdrop of the eruption. Secondly, we will study the tebhaga movement in Bengal to provide the context. Thirdly, the work shall trace the emergence of the concept of tebhaga and its penetration to the Surma Valley districts. Fourthly, it will study the organisation of Kisan Sabha in Cachar and its appropriation of the concept of tebhaga in mobilising the peasants and *bhagchasi* of the region. Lastly, on the basis of the contemporary accounts, it will structure the actual events that took place under the banner of tebhaga movement.

Cachar (Kachar) is situated in south Assam and is confined by the mountaneous ranges from three sides. The landscape of the district is full of ranges, river system, plains, lakes and marshes. The Nile of Cachar—the river Barak flowing east to west virtually bisects the districts.



It is the Barak and its tributaries which have created a large area of alluvial plain suitable for cultivation. Perhaps this attracted the people of diverse races to adopt this valley for settlement. Fisher observed that the soil of Cachar is mixture of land and silicean particles and could produce large variety of produce.<sup>7</sup> "There can be no doubt of the great prosperity of the inhabitants of Cachar. The country is extremely fertile, and yields heavy crops with hardly any cultivation."<sup>8</sup> In rainy season, most of the plain area get inundated resulting in marshes and lakes. But the annual inundation seems to be a boon for the fertility of the soil. The main crops are rice, wheat, pulse, potato and sugarcane.<sup>9</sup> The cultivators get at least two crops annually in most of the areas. The fertility of the soil is further referred to by R.B. Pemberton and J.C. Burns who were associated with Cachar district.

In the beginning of the 19th century a large part of the district, particularly the area north of the Barak was under forest cover. A charmed visitor observed, "the rich vegetation, beautiful forms of hills, the fertility of the cultivated lands, the size and beauty of the bamboo groves, fruit trees that surround the cottage of the people and even the wild and primeval appearance of the great marshes, give a richness and picturesque variety to the scenery of Cachar, is a rare instance which is generally wanting in the monotonous plains of Eastern Bengal".<sup>10</sup>

Cachar has a little similarity with Assam proper in respect of language, culture and tradition other than being an administrative unit. This distinction has long been noticed. R.B. Pemberton while writing a report on the Eastern Frontier of British India observed that "from Sylhet to Jirighat the border of Manipur, the geographical feature, the appearance of the people, language, culture and tradition are alike."<sup>11</sup> Obviously, Pemberton did not find any similarity with the other parts of Assam. Grierson's survey found the Bengali language of Barak-Surma Valley as part of the Eastern Bengal dialect. Even geographically, the Barak Valley is an extension and continuation of the Bengal plain. Earlier it was put under Assam for administrative convenience and later the partition of India did not live any scope for re-organisation of the state. Prior to the establishment of British rule, Cachar was ruled by

an independent dynasty belonging to the Dimasa tribals. Gobinda Chandra, the last Raja was assisted by the British power in repulsing the Burmese invasion and was on friendly terms. He was assassinated in 1830. In the absence of any successor, Cachar was annexed to the British territory. However, western part i.e., Karimganj which was earlier under the Mughal authority, was already under British control even before the establishment of British rule in Cachar. Sylhet and Cachar were districts in Dacca division of Bengal till the region was transferred to the newly created Chief Commissionership of Assam in 1874.

### **Objective and Hypothesis**

The basic objective of the study is to integrate the development in North East India with those of the rest of India to enable the reconstruction of a truly national history of India. In doing so, the local backdrop, roots, development and socio-economic consequences of tebhaga in North East India will be studied in comparison with North Bengal where the tebhaga was the strongest. The working hypothesis is that, notwithstanding local variations, the tebhaga movement had encompassed some districts of pre-colonial North Eastern region to throw up a strong peasant resistance to some of the remnant feudal economic institutions, concurrently with the freedom struggle. The emphasis will be on the study of the role of middle class leadership from outside, the emergence of a peasant leadership from within the aggrieved peasants themselves and the role of communist ideology and organisation in the movement. It will also be seen how far it was able to exert simultaneous pressure on the colonial state.

### **Survey of Literature**

Militant peasant movement which took place in different parts of India have by now received attention of the historians. Though only next to North Bengal, the main centre of the tebhaga peasant movement was in the different region of the district of Cachar. As the area is situated in geographically isolated pockets in north eastern parts of India, the

movement did not catch the attention of the national historians. The tebhaga peasant movement in Surma Valley was no less intensive and militant than North Bengal, but the martyrdom of seven peasant activists found no place in the history of all India peasant movement. No systematic description or analysis of the peasant movement in this part of the erstwhile Surma Valley has been conducted. It is, therefore, necessary to bring out the features of the glorious history of the peasant movement that took place in Cachar.

The narration of the experience of some peasant activists and the communist leaders are the only authentic source materials to highlight the tebhaga peasant movement in this region. Mrinal Dasgupta's *Je Path Diye Elem*, Chanchal Sharma's book, *Surma Upathakay Krishak O Sramik Andolener Itihas*, and Srihatte Biplobbad O Communist Andolon, *Smritikatha*, are very important literature on peasant movement and tebhaga *andolan* in particular. *Nankar Bidroho* by Ajoy Bhattacharjee is a narration of the direct experience of the peasant movement of a peasant leader. This researcher's first attempt on the subject is a paper on 'Land Reform and Peasant Movement' published by North East India Council for Social Science Research in 1986. Some published works are available from Bangladesh e.g., *Peasant Utopia* by Taj-Ul-Islam Hasmi. Some experience of the peasant movement with reference to tebhaga movement in Cachar and Goalpara has been recently published in *Subarnajayanti Prakashmala* in 1986 where three famous leaders of the then Assam, Late Biresh Chandra Mishra, Late Achinta Bhattacharjee and Pranesh Biswas has written articles. These are: 'Surma Upathyakay Krishoker Larai', 'Assam Krishak Sabha Gorar Bacharguli' and 'Krishoker Larai O Assame Krishak Sabha Gathaner Itihas'.

## Data and Methodology

The major sources of the study are:

### A. Archival Sources

- 1) Settlement reports from the District Settlement Office, Cachar which gives detailed informations about land settlement in Cachar.

- 2) Assam State Gazette preserved in the district record office, Cachar, Silchar.
- 3) Police records of the relevant period from the office of the Superintendent of Police, Cachar, Silchar.
- 4) Assembly debate from the Assam State Assembly Library, Dispur, Guwahati.
- 5) Reports of the Secretary, Governor of Assam from Assam State Archives.
- 6) Police records from Special Branch Headquarter, Assam Police, Kahilipara, Dispur, Guwahati.
- 7) Newspaper reports on the period concerned from National Library Annex, Calcutta.
- 8) Documents and newspaper of Communist Party of India (Marxist) from CPI(M) Headquarters, Alimuddin Street Calcutta.
- 9) Relevant materials from:
  - i) Bhupesh Gupta Library, Entally, Calcutta.
  - ii) Library of the Centre for Studies Social Science, Calcutta.
  - iii) Library of Sahitya Academy, Calcutta.
- 10) Census Report from the NEHU Library, Shillong.

#### B. Oral Sources

Important personalities connected with the movement and the peasant activists have been extensively interviewed. Prominent among them are:

- i) Dwijen Sengupta.
- ii) Late Motilal Jagirdar.
- iii) Surviving wife of Motilal Jagirdar, Mrs. Manashi Jagirdar.
- iv) Moni Roy.
- v) Bhagirath Singh.
- vi) Sona Singh.
- vii) Chandreswar Singh.
- viii) Anurupa Biswas.
- ix) Late Mrinal Kanti Dasgupta & others.

#### C. Memoirs and Reports from the Participants

- i) Chanchal Kumar Sharma, *Surma Upathyakay Krishak O Sramik Andoloner Itihas, Srihatte Biplobbad O Communist Andolan-Smritikatha.*

- ii) Mrinal Kanti Dasgupta, *Je Path Diye Elam*.
- iii) Ajoy Bhattacharjee, *Nankar Bidroho*.
- iv) Subarna Jayanti Prakashmala of Krisak Sabha 1936-1986. Articles of Achinta Bhattacharjee, Pranesh Biswas and Bires Chandra Mishra.

In addition to these, some secondary source will be used. As far as methodology is concerned, the study will adopt empirical method.

### Organisation

The study is divided into nine chapters, beginning with an introduction which traces the history and role of peasant movement in India and the importance of tebhaga movement in Cachar. We have tried to bring to light in this chapter that the tebhaga movement which was the brain child of the Communist Party of India and the Kisan Sabha failed to record the first politically organised movement in Cachar in their history. It is our endeavour to add one more leaf to the history of peasant movement by establishing the fact that Tebhaga movement did take place in Cachar.

The second chapter traces the evolution of land tenure and revenue system in the pre-colonial period. The pre-colonial period is attributed to the rule of Dimasa tribal Kings. During their rule, practically speaking, no proper land tenure system evolved. The entire Cachar plains were covered by forest and swamps. There were not much space for human settlement but there was no dearth of land for cultivation and settlement. The adjoining district of Sylhet was thickly populated. The vast tract of uninhabited land of Cachar allured them to extend their cultivation. The development of settlement in a new found territory in the Cachar plains has a history of its own. The early settlers were all peasants. They organised themselves into groups and then proceeded beyond the settled areas to occupy a fallow tract of the size that would be enough for the subsistence of the group. The area was known as *khel*. It was indeed an agricultural guild and collectively managed by the inhabitants. Each village was considered as a self-sufficient autonomous unit. The king did

not interfere with the functioning of the *khel*. Every *khel* had a *mukhtar* elected by the villagers. At a later date the *mukhtar* became the agent of the king.

When the British annexed Cachar, they allowed the existing system to continue, but when the question of revenue arose, the British government surveyed the land and framed rules of settlement from time to time. These were the five years settlement rules of 1838–39, settlement for 15 years in 1843–44, Capt. Stewart's settlement for 20 years etc. In order to induce further settlement the British also offered favourable terms for reclamation of jungle lands called *janglebari* lease of 1866, 1875 and 1882.

The most comprehensive settlement operation was carried out by W.L. Scot in 1917–18. Scot's settlement expired in 1938 but due to the difficult situation created by the war, the term was thence extended upto 31st March, 1948. The last settlement of the district was done by R. Sharma. This settlement was the first major settlement in the state carried out under the provisions of the Assam Land Revenue Reassessment Act 1936, the enactment of which marked an important event in the history of development of the system of revenue assessment in Assam.

As already mentioned, the Dimasa king allowed the *khel* system to operate independently but the heads of *khels* were subjected to the authority of the royal officers. The *mukhtar* became an important official of the state. He was the collector of the revenue and the civil and criminal judges. The British liquidated the *khel* system and the land was privatised. They declared the actual occupant of land as the owner, granted them *patta* and declared them *mirasdar*, as they paid rent directly to the government.

From the above facts we have analysed how the feudal element was imposed in the rural economy and how the different settlement rules gave rise to different classes of peasants in the Ryotwari settlement, including sub-tenancy and *Bhagchasi*. It will also be studied how the seeds of future struggle by the peasant was sown by British.

In Bengal after a prolong debate in the British government, permanent settlement of zamindari system was introduced there. But the system became so all pervasive that it ruined the

entire self sufficient economy of Bengal. The net result was so disastrous that even the farmers of this system had to repent. It was the cause of famine in Bengal, it was the cause of giving birth to different classes of peasants and neo-zamindars. Consequently, demands were raised from all quarters for the abolition of zamindari system. This resulted in the appointment of a Commission in 1938 with Sir Francis Floud as Chairman and some experts in revenue matters and economists, leading lawyers and representatives of landlords and tenants as members to examine the existing land system in Bengal in its various aspects and to advise what modifications, if any, should be made and to what manner and what stages they should be affected.

The chapter three discusses the above report of the Commission. This commission may be regarded as the initiator of the tebhaga movement. It recommended two-third share of the produce which subsequently became the battle cry of the tebhaga movement. In this we tried to show how the recommendations of the Floud Commission conferred legitimacy to the movement of the *adhiars* of Bengal who had already demanded two-third share in their local agitation. We have also shown how the Floud Commission left a deep impact in the mind of the people of Assam.

The fourth chapter details the outbreak of tebhaga movement in North Bengal after the recommendations of the Floud Commission. The Commission submitted its report in 1940 and in the same year the Bengal Kisan Sabha in its Panjia Conference for the first time raised the demand for two-third share of produce for the *Bargadars*. Although the movement took place little later, it has been seen how the Bengal peasant revolted against the century old oppression and shook the foundation of the colonial state. It also brings out to what extent the tebhaga movement hastened the British withdrawal from India.

The fifth chapter studies the emergence of Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party in Cachar. The Kisan Sabha gave leadership to many peasant movements in Cachar and in 1946, along with Bengal, the oppressed *Bhagchasi* stood up unitedly to demand their legitimate two-third share of the produce. The movement continued throughout the entire harvesting season

of 1946 but the government was not in a mood to accept their demand. The movement in 1946 was conducted in a peaceful manner and achieved partial success.

The sixth chapter deals with the peasant movement in general in the districts of Sylhet and Goalpara and tebhaga movement in particular. In the north eastern states, both the districts were always a part of province of Bengal and the land tenure system was permanent settlement. In those areas the landlords enjoyed extensive power and position, but the condition of the peasant deteriorated. Goalpara produced a leader like Maulana Bhasani who organised the muslim peasants in 1930s and later the Communist party and Kisan Sabha continued his unfinished task. Sylhet district was already engrossed in *nankar* agitation and national freedom struggle along with these movements, the peasants of Bhanubil, Bhatipara and Bangshikunda fought against the landlords oppression. When Bengal peasants organised the tebhaga movement, according to record, only one incident of tebhaga movement took place in Sylhet.

The seventh chapter discusses the second phase of the tebhaga agitation. The peasant realised that, short of total fulfilment of their demand, they were not going to stop. They carried out the propaganda relentlessly with aggressive design and finally in 1949 tebhaga again broke out taking a violent turn. The 1949 movement was confined to Borkhola where five peasant activists were killed by police firing and two Manipuri women received bullet injury, one of whom died in the police custody.

The eighth chapter analyses the strategy, pattern and technique of the movement. It also studies the basic feature of the movement in Cachar as contrasted to the North Bengal movement. It also studies the causes of taking violent turn of the movement along with the composition of the peasantry and its leaders. The chapter in question also tries to highlight the class character of the peasant as well as the middle class leadership.

The last chapter is the conclusion which summarises the spread of tebhaga movement from Bengal to Cachar. It refutes the contention that tebhaga remained confined to North Bengal and Kakdwip only. It shows that without the



knowledge of the organisers of the movement in Bengal and even the chroniclers of tebhaga, the movement had erupted in distant Barak Valley not once but twice and in some pockets of Goalpara, thereby completing the All India pattern of peasant movement in India.

### ENDNOTES

1. B. Choudhury, 'Eastern India', in: *The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. II*, p. 90.
2. *Op. cit.*
3. Rajni Palme Dutt, *India Today*, p. 276.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
5. Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspect of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, p. 4.
6. Sunil Sen, *Peasant Movement in India*, p. 107.
7. J.B. Bhattacharjee, *Cachar Under British Rule in North East India*, p. 184.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 185.
10. W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Assam*, p. 363.
11. R.B. Pemberton, *A Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India*, p. 206.

## World of Tebhaga

The *tebhaga* movement which started in North Bengal and gradually engulfed the districts of East Bengal found its natural way to the Barak-Surma Valley due to its geographical contiguity and ethnolinguistic affinity as well as similarity in the nature of peasants' problems which attracted the attention of peasant leaders of Bengal to unite the peasants to a common cry of *tebhaga*. Cachar region which was the latest addition to the map of *tebhaga* and where the *tebhaga* spirit survived till end is the area of main focus in our study. Therefore, we may resort to a survey of the history, land system and peasants situation in Cachar.

Needless to say that the *tebhaga* movement in North East India essentially means a study of the said historic movement in the Barak Valley region of Assam today. The peasant situation and the peasants' problems which provoked a massive peasant reaction were present in this part of the North Eastern region. The peasant uprising, reaction and even organised peasant movement have been noted and studied by the scholars in the permanently settled districts of Goalpara and Sylhet. Cachar was outside the permanently settled region, yet *tebhaga* movement influenced the peasant in this area also.

It will be evident from our study that the *tebhaga* movement in North East India was limited to these three districts of North East, viz., Goalpara, Sylhet and Cachar. This *tebhaga* movement was essentially a Bengal phenomenon and these three districts had historical, geographical and cultural affinity with Bengal. The *tebhaga* impact was, therefore, but natural. Our special emphasis on the Cachar area in the Barak Valley is for the simple reason that Cachar was outside

permanent settlement, the peasant movement in this area have so far been unnoticed by the peasant historians and the primary data gathered by us relates mainly to the Cachar area with an intention to integrate this area into the peasant history of India.

The common identity for this area of our study is Barak Valley. It is composed of three districts—Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. The district of Karimganj was never a part of the Cachar district. It was only after independence and partition of India that three and half thanas of Sylhet district was integrated with the Cachar district. The valley is surrounded on three sides by hills and mountains and only on the fourth side it is exposed to the Sylhet district of Bangladesh without any natural barrier. The total population of the Valley according to 1991 census is 2490009<sup>1</sup> and the total area 6922 k.m.<sup>2</sup> The region is bounded on the north by the North Cachar hills and Jaintia hills, on the east is Manipur, on the south by Mizoram and on the west by Tripura and the Sylhet district of Bangladesh. This area was commonly known as Cachar plains that formed the eastern extremity of the alluvial valley of Surma and was geographically, historically, and ethnically an extension of Gangetic Bengal. Cachar plains consisted of Silchar and Hailakandi sub-division of Cachar district in British time and the region was generally known as South Cachar.

The principal river of the valley is Barak. It flows through the heart of the Cachar district and fed by many tributaries coming from both directions. The fertility of the soil of this valley owes much to the river Barak. In the right bank of Barak, the tributaries like Jiri, Chiri, Madhura and Jatinga join the river carrying the rain water of the North Cachar hills. In the left bank Rukni-Sonai, Dhaleswori-Katakhal and Ghagra join the Barak in different places. The Katakhal passes through the fertile Hailakandi valley and joins the river Barak in the downstream. The river Barak after flowing through the Cachar district gets divided into Kushiara and Surma, losing its original identity. The total length of the course of the river within Cachar is 130 miles. After flowing through the modern Sylhet district of Bangladesh both the streams join the old stream of Brahmaputra near Bhirab Bazar in Mymensingh. Due to this

network of river system the district is abundantly watered by the Barak river and its affluents. Winding about in all directions, the streams afford water carriage from all parts. There are low ranges of hills and occasional sandy 'tila' or hillocks. These are either forest clad or have been made into tea gardens. Besides the river system, hills and sandy *tilas*, the valley has a large number of *haors* and *bils* on the left and right bank affording scope for deposit of spills of Barak and finally discharging them again to the river through the spill channels, thus saving the vast area from water logging and water conjection.

We do not intend to go to the remote antiquity to trace the history of Cachar. Suffice it to say that Cachar-Sylhet region was included in the various kingdoms that had emerged in south east Bengal during early historic period like Gauda, Banga and Samatata. Cachar and Sylhet together formed the Srihattarajya or Srihatta kingdom in 11th-12th century A.D. as it is known from some copper-plate inscriptions of that period. It is after this kingdom that the people of the Barak Valley are known as Sylheti and their language Sylheti dialect of Bengali. In ancient time Cachar, Sylhet and Chittagong were colonised by the Aryans and the area was known as *Pratyanta Desha*.<sup>3</sup>

During the later part of the 18th century, Cachar was annexed by the Dimasa kings of Maibong and this opened a new chapter in the history of Cachar. In the 20s and 30s of the 19th century, the Dimasa kingdom was considerably weakened. With the assassination of the last Raja Gobinda Chandra, who had no heir, the Cachar plain was annexed by the British in 1832. Immediately after the annexation, Thomas Fisher, the Superintendent of survey in Sylhet was posted in-charge of Cachar. Like Assam, Cachar was declared to be a non-regulated province under Regulation X of 1822. Meanwhile, the attention of the government was drawn by the fact that socially, linguistically and geographically Cachar was a part of Bengal. Considering this historical fact, Lord Bentinck, the Governor-General, decided that Cachar be placed under the control of the Dacca commissionership and managed by the same regulations as existed for the neighbouring district of Sylhet. Accordingly in 1836, Cachar was included in Dacca division and the Superintendent's headquarter was shifted

from Dudpatil to Silchar. In the meantime, in 1833 Thomas Fisher was appointed as the first Superintendent of Cachar. Since then the area within the districts of Sylhet and Cachar was known as Surma Valley. Throughout the British rule, Cachar had three sub-divisions, viz., Silchar, Haflong and Hailakandi.

This arrangement continued for about four decades. The British rulers were more concerned for their administrative convenience than for linguistic and cultural affinity of Indian people. What Lord Bentinck did in 1836 was undone by his own successors. Without respect for the cultural affinity and emotional bond the district of Cachar and Sylhet was severed from Bengal and transferred to the newly established province of Assam in 1874. This ill-conceived action of the British government generated anger in the minds of the people of this region. However, the region maintained a special identity till independence of the country in 1947.

When India was partitioned on the basis of two nation theory, this region had to bear the burnt of partition. The district of Sylhet was partitioned by a referendum. Three and half thanas of the district of Sylhet, viz., Karimganj, Ratabari, Patherkandi and Badarpur which was considered as Hindu majority were retained in India and became parts of Cachar district as Karimganj sub-division of Assam. The composition of population of the district before partition were as under: Hindu, Mohammadans, Manipuri, up-country population made up of tea garden labourers, and the minor elements are hill tribes living in plains like Cacharies, Nagas, Kukies, Rehangs, Tipras, Khasis, Lushais and Nepalties who mostly live by jhuming in hill and hillocks and by wet cultivation on foothills.<sup>4</sup> Of these nearly one third of the inhabitants of the plains of Cachar in 1911 were coolies or of the ex-cooli class.<sup>5</sup> The total area of the district at that time was 3862sq. km. and total population 570531 in 1931<sup>6</sup> which went upto 2680 sq. km. and population of 1,11,5865 in 1951<sup>7</sup> after partition of India. After independence the Cachar district was reorganised and re-constituted with four sub-divisions viz., Karimganj, Silchar, Hailakandi and Haflong. The demands were made to constitute a new unit having common language and culture immediately after independence.

Nevertheless, the government of Assam partly due to political expediency and partly for administrative convenience re-organised the Cachar district from time to time. Haflong sub-division was attached to Diphu in 1951 to form the United North Cachar and Mikir hills district.<sup>8</sup> This district was bifurcated into Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar hills district in 1970.<sup>9</sup> Karimganj became a separate district in 1983 and Hailakandi in 1989.<sup>10</sup> The old Silchar sub-division is now known as Cachar district. As a result the Barak Valley today has three districts viz., Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. Nonetheless, Cachar and Hailakandi of today means the Cachar district of the British time and this area happens to be our main concern in this study.

### Cachar Region

The Cachar plains or the Cachar and Hailakandi district is confined by the mountaneous range from three sides. The landscape of the region is full of ranges and river systems, plains, lakes and marshes. The Nile of Cachar, the river Barak flowing east to west virtually disects the district. It is the Barak and its tributaries which have created a large area of alluvial plain suitable for cultivation. Perhaps, this plain attracted people of diverse races to settle down here. Fisher observed that the soil of Cachar was mixture of land and silicean particles and could produce large variety of products.<sup>11</sup> In rainy season most of the plain area get inundated resulting in marshes and lakes. But the annual inundation seems to be a boon for the fertility of soil. At the time of British annexation the main crops were rice, wheat, pulse and potato and considerable improvement was made in sugarcane cultivation.<sup>12</sup> The cultivators got atleast two crops annually in most of the areas. The fertility of the soil is further referred by Pemberton and Burns who were associated with administration of the Cachar district.<sup>13</sup>

In the beginning of the 19th century, a large part of the district, particularly the area north of the Barak, was under forest cover. Cachar has no similarity with the state of Assam in respect of culture, tradition, belief other than being an administrative unit. This distinction has long been noticed.

R.B. Pemberton while writing a report on the Eastern Frontier of British India in 1835 observed that from Sylhet to Jirighat (the border of Manipur) the geographical feature, the appearance of the people, language, culture and tradition are alike.<sup>14</sup> Obviously, Pemberton did not find any similarity with the other parts of Assam. Even geographically Cachar is separated from the Assam proper by geographical barrier. It is more close to the Bengal plains and an extension of that area. The British included this area in Assam as they were more concerned with their own interest than for the people of Cachar.

### Pre-British Land Tenure System

During the rule of Dimasa kings of Cachar, the king was the owner of the land and alienated by the occupants or inherited by their heirs. These rights were exercised by simply on sufferance and were liable to be overridden by the superior rights of the sovereign. No proper land tenure or land revenue system evolved during this period. As land was plenty, rents were extremely low in the beginning mostly in kinds. The earliest traceable rates were "bring a he-goat a pair of fowl, a duck and two coconuts from each holding irrespective of its size". Subsequently, the rent was fixed at 12 annas (0.75) for each hal. It is said that during the reign of Gobinda Chandra, the revenue obtained from same land were as much as Rs. 6.00 per hal.<sup>15</sup> Revenue was at first paid in form of labour and part of the produce as was the practice under the Ahoms in Assam.

The neighbouring district of Sylhet was a thickly populated district. Land was a scarce commodity. But Cachar district has enough fallow land and number of population were very very small. This factor induced the peasant of Sylhet to extend the cultivation to this tract gradually and to pitch settlement in the reclaimed areas. There was no natural barrier between Cachar and Sylhet and the Cachar portion of the valley was neither directly covered by an existing local state to create a political barrier nor was it then peopled by any other ethnic group. The social boundary of Sylhet was expanded as an uninterrupted historical process through familiar terrain over the land which was suitable for the type of cultivation then prevalent in Sylhet and the adjoining districts of Bengal.

"The development of settlement in a new found territory in the Cachar plain has a history of its own. The early settlers were all peasants. They organised themselves in group and then proceeded beyond the settled areas to occupy a fallow tract of the size that would be enough for the subsistence of the group. They set up boundary, reclaimed the tract collectively, started cultivation and established the village in a portion of the area reclaimed by the group. The area was known as *khel*. It was indeed an agricultural guild, collectively managed by the inhabitants. They elected from their rank a headman, called *mukhtar* who managed the affairs of the *khel* with the help of elders. Every *khel* had a *Mukhtar* & these *mukhtars* were locally known as *Bhuiyan* or *Laskar*. A *khel* was autonomous or self-governing for all purposes. In this process, one after another *khel* came into existence till the natural limit of the plains at the foot of the hills was reached."<sup>16</sup>

The *khel* grew independent of the control of the kachari Raja. They did not interfere directly in their affair, but the heads of *khels* were subjected to the authority of the royal officers. The *mukhtar* became an important official of the state at a later date and was the collector of the revenue and the civil and criminal judge. Besides in every *khel* the leading man got various titles and was rewarded with certain revenue free holdings. Thus the Choudhuries or the head of the *khel* got two *hals*<sup>17</sup> of land free, the Majumder  $1\frac{1}{2}$  *hal*, the Laskar  $1\frac{1}{4}$  *hal* and Barbhuiya and Mazarbhuiya 6 *khiyars*.<sup>18</sup> The free holdings were later on abolished and the title became a source of revenue for the ruler. The title Choudhury was fetching Rs. 100/- and so on.

According to Baden Powell a number of *khels* formed a *Raj* or *Rajya* and the *Raij* had its representative at the court called *Raij-Mukhtar*.<sup>19</sup>

The *mukhtars* were at a later stage became the owner of big plot of lands and were called *Mirasdar*. If a *mirasdar* failed to pay the revenue due to him the other members paid his and took his holding. If on the other hand the whole *khel* failed to pay the larger group or *Raj* took the responsibility to take the land of defaulting *khel*. Numbers of outsiders were allowed to be admitted. In the same way, the revenue receipt of the



kingdom were apportioned among the different members of the royal family and group of holding and revenue of which was assigned were also *khels*.

"There were the *khelma* or *bara-khel*, the entire revenue of which went to Raja, the Maharani's *khel*  $\frac{1}{4}$  of which went to the Raja's chief wife and  $\frac{3}{4}$  to the Raja himself, the *Sangjarai* or younger brother's *khel* and so on. If the revenue of the tract devoted to the religious purposes that was again *khel*, thus, there were the *Dhisingsa khel* devoted to the support of worship of Kali, the Bishnu God *khel* to the Laxmi-Narayan. These lands are still known now form *mauzas*."<sup>20</sup>

### Advent of the British

After annexation by the British, Cachar was placed under Thomas Fisher in June 1830 with powers of a magistrate and collector and became the first Superintendent at a later date in (1833) subordinated to the Governor General's Agent for North East Frontier. But in 1836, the district was placed under the administrative jurisdiction of Dacca commissionership. The designation of Superintendent changed to Deputy Commissioner in 1861 who was empowered as magistrate, Collector and Civil judge.<sup>21</sup> Further by an act of 1835 the government placed Cachar along with five other districts of Assam under the jurisdiction of Board of Revenue of lower Bengal in revenue matters.

Shortly after the British annexation the land revenue rates for various categories of land were

Cleared cultivated	...	...	Rs. 5-2-0 per <i>Kulba</i>
Chara or Seed land	...	...	Rs. 3-3-0

Moreover, ditto, homestead, tanks were rent free. But with the intention to extend cultivation, the jungle land was given rent free for the 1000 days is approximately 3 years and thereafter revenue rate in the range of Rs. 2-12-0 to Rs. 3-8-0 was fixed. For example the land revenue demand for the year<sup>22</sup> were:

Demand	...	...	...	Rs. 21649-0-0
Misc. demand	...	...	...	Rs. 5516-0-0
			Total	Rs. 27165-0-0

G. Verner, Superintendent of Cachar observed that,

"In consequences of two or three bad seasons caused by the heavy rains and inundation by which the crops were much injured and the people were unable to pay in all their revenue. It was thought that the rates were probably too high and was considered advisable that they should be reduced and a new settlement was ordered to be made."<sup>23</sup>

During take over of the district administration the British found the material condition of the district very poor. Fisher, the first Superintendent of Cachar wrote in his memoirs of the country,

"Its population had not exceeded forty thousand and it had only 200 sq. mile of the plain country."<sup>24</sup>

There was little or almost no differences of the houses occupied by the different classes of people. From the Rajas to the meanest peasant, they are small inconvenient and unsubstantial.<sup>25</sup> One of the reasons of poverty, as settlement officers write, was that the crops cannot be sown in the fields because of inundation and when sown earlier, they were destroyed by excess water (in the rainy season) while in Sylhet the rice crop sown before the rains set in grow upto the start of winter, thus crop stands above the water level even during inundation period.<sup>26</sup>

### Attempts at Maximisation of Revenue

Soon the British rulers tried to maximise the land revenue to run their administration. Since land was the major means of production—the British officials made this objective to bring the idle land under cultivation which was not possible due to the absence of sufficient people. In the mean time, the British officials were not happy with the permanent settlement and they introduced a new settlement in Madras presidency i.e., Ryotwari system (Munro Settlement). Col. Henry Hopkinson, the commissioner of Assam recommended introduction of Ryotwari system in Assam including Cachar. But the board of revenue favoured the idea of creation of a landed gentry on the model of Bengal zamindari system which resembles the

English feudal system. However, in Cachar in 1838-39, the British government made a new settlement for five years only, where the land revenue demand was reduced for cleared cultivated lands from Rs. 5-2-0 per *kulba* to Rs. 3/- and for seed land from Rs. 2-12-0 (Rs. 2.75) to Rs. 3-8-0 (Rs. 3.50) to Rs. 2-8-0 per *kulba* and the rest of the demand remained as it was. Subsequently, the government discovered that most parties had much more land under cultivation than they paid revenue for resulting in the need for fresh survey.

A survey was conducted by Lt. Thuiller in 1841.<sup>27</sup> The survey was extended to cultivated field and those waste which was likely to be cultivated was surveyed and divided into numbered *dags* or plots were made. The demarcations were expected to help in determining the size of the plots. But when the jungle areas were taken up for cultivation it created more confusion. Thus on this experience, a land settlement was made in 1842-43. On the 5th June, 1843 E.R. Lyon, the Superintendent of Cachar, submitted a report to the Commissioner of Dacca which provided informations regarding land settlement and rate of assessment.<sup>28</sup> The report mentions that the population of Cachar was very low in comparison to the total availability of cultivable land. Owing to this the village was situated only at the best sites. Despite the land yielded at least two crops in a year and in some cases cultivators were able to raise the third crop due to productivity. That is why *mirasdars* demanded rent at the rate of Rs. 6/- per *kulba* from the *ryots* throughout the district. Lyon argued that a uniform rate of assessment should be adopted for Cachar, because it would help the *ryots*. The differential rates had helped the land holders who did not remit any part of their accustomed demand.

E.R. Lyons further states,<sup>29</sup>

"The following classification will give you (Commissioner) some idea about relative quality of land etc. This I do not consider definite and I deemed it proper to bring to your notice the fact of the records not exhibiting land in some case according to the *mirasdar's* estimation of it. For instance estates in Pargana Katigorah, Horreteekar and Borkhola, though ranked by Lt. Thuiller as of second quality are as much on request as estates in Pargana Gumrah, Kallain and

Bikrampur recorded as first quality while assessed alike i.e., land in Katigorah from its advantages of the situation would I believe realised a tripple more if put up for sale at public auction than any other in Cachar. The above is with reference to taxation and dispels in apparent paradox in assessing lands said to be of first and second quality at the same rates."

He concluded that,

"the present rate of assessment is extremely favourable to the land holders."

### Reclaiming the Land to Increase Revenue Collection

British officials wished to extend the cultivation by bringing jungle land under cultivation. This could be possible only when a large number of people would migrate to Cachar and settle down. According to E.R. Lyon, the total population of Cachar in 1844 was about 80,000.<sup>30</sup> Lyon's letter to his superiors suggested that the immigration from adjoining areas was taking place which resulted in the increase of land revenue. It reported that the people had come to Cachar on their own, though small in numbers but continuously for getting better condition. These people who were strongly attached to their birth place migrated towards Cachar because they were getting favourable rate of rent which was Rs. 6/- per *kulba*, where even after the deduction of all expenses they were gaining Rs. 12/- per *kulba*—a considerable amount. Perhaps these favourable terms led to the clearance of jungle. Even the government's rate of Rs. 3/- per *kulba* was a great attraction. Besides the rate, the relationship between the *mirasdar* and *ryot* were quite good and *mirasdar* protected the *ryots* to prevent them from leaving the land, because large number of *ryots* were required in their region.

After 1842-43 another settlement was made in 1859 for 20 years, but no significant change did take place. However, in 1867, the Bengal government, which was administering the newly annexed territory of Assam finally decided with the approval of the government of India, that the actual occupant of the soil was to be given as secure a tenure as can be

conferred upon his subject to the payment of revenue at the rate fixed for longer period. The period decided was 10 years and the rights conferred were made heritable and transferable. This was another attempt by the officials to promote the agriculture by extending cultivated area. Similarly, the government encouraged reclamation of waste land particularly the jungle land which was brought under cultivation. For this purpose the government extended concession in land revenue. In 1864, the government of Bengal laid down certain principles for the purpose. It was generally known as *junglebari* or waste land reclamation leases. According to the main provision, these leases were usually for 30 years and the revenue assessed was<sup>31</sup>

i) First 3 years	...	...	Revenue free
ii) Next 5 years	...	...	Rs. 0-3-0 per acre
iii) Next 5 years	...	...	Rs. 0-6-0 per acre
iv) Next 5 years	...	...	Rs. 0-12-0 per acre
v) Next 12 years	...	...	Rs. 1-8-0 per acre

Besides these provisions, the leases were settled after expiring, but the *Jama* happened to be moderate and had never exceeded one half of gross rental. Moreover, if a peasant failed to clear areas only the cleared area could be settled. Thus the provisions were extremely favourable for the settlers. This was realised by the government later on and the terms of lease were modified in 1875.<sup>32</sup> The government also reduced the lease period to 20 years and after expiry of the lease the area had to be settled according to the current district rates. The revenue rates were fixed as follows:

i) For the first 2 years	...	...	Revenue free
ii) For next 4 years	...	...	Rs. 0-3-0 per acre
iii) For next 4 years	...	...	Rs. 0-6-0 per acre
iv) For next 12 years	...	...	Rs. 0-12-0 per acre <sup>33</sup>

However, in 1876 the government abrogated the act of 1875 on the ground that two rules cannot be implemented in the same province because in Assam Valley the 30 years waste land rule was operational. However, this was applied in special cases and was less favourable to the lessee.<sup>34</sup> From this year 1900, the number of *Janglebari* leases started falling

down and finally after 1912 they were re-settled. These provisions amply suggest that these aimed at the extension of cultivation.

The government initiated the process of settlement in 1879 and this was completed in 1883. The settlement was quite comprehensive and the cultivated land was divided into two classes called *awal* and *duam* (first and second) and even within a class the rates varied into four grades, according to the productivity as well as other factors, e.g. distance, transport facility, ravages of wild animals etc.<sup>35</sup>

A remarkable feature about the revenue system in Cachar is that inspite of major changes made by the British, the joint responsibility of the *khel* system survived. The old *khel* group,

"having in the course of years naturally been much altered by resignation of holding, by addition and so forth; but in some long settled tracks, the old *khel* group is still recognised. The land being held under the Assam principles of ryot holding under a 'patta' issued by government, in Cachar, each *Mahal* is held under one patta. The *Mahal* thus, a tract held by a body of persons, who are joint in interest and this joint interest arises out of old *khel* grouping. But the *khel* organisation has been otherwise lost since there is no system of *mukhtars* and representatives of the communities with the authorities as in old days. The number of co-sharer and signatories is often as large as eighty or hundred. All the sharers or *mirasdars* are jointly liable for the revenue of the *Mahal* specified in the *patta*. The sharer in the *Mahal* are at present left entirely to themselves as to the apportionment of the revenue responsibility over individual holdings. But in the present settlement a record of rights has been made."<sup>36</sup>

W.W. Hunter described the land tenure system of the district in pre-1872 as combining the ordinary cultivation tenures of the district and the grants of tea lands, the land tenure of Cachar, may be arranged in five following classes:

- i) The *mirasdari* tenure of Major Stewart settlement
- ii) Grants still existing under old Assam rules

- iii) Grants in free simple including both originally made under the waste land rules and these connected under the old Assam rules.
- iv) Lease of waste land for terms of 30 years under the old and new *mirasdari* rules
- v) Revenue free tenures such as *Baksha, Lekhi-Raj*.<sup>37</sup>

The only sub-tenures in the district were those held under the mirasdar by *Paikashtha*, whose status was that of yearly tenants, though their total number was insignificant. But it indicated that sub-tenancy had already started in Cachar, when not actually employed in cultivating their own holding the peasants were engaged in cutting timbers for domestic use and trade. In spite of their poor condition the peasant displayed an aversion to hire themselves out for money wages. When 'coolies' were required for public purpose a recourse had to be taken to local system of forced labour acted through the agency of *Tehashildar*. A small group of labourers used to come to Cachar during winter season from the more densely populated district of Sylhet. They found employment chiefly in carrying loads for trade and shopkeepers and were paid in cash.

As discussed above there was abundance of fallow lands in the region which was not taken up for tillage. According to a return of 1876 out of a total area of 3750 sq. mile or 68% of the total was estimated as waste but cultivable.<sup>38</sup> Even after the 50 years of British occupation, the condition of the cultivators was by and large better than other parts of India. In Cachar, the land settlement was ryotwari where the revenue was assessed by the government directly with the cultivators who were termed *mirasdars*, the same name as was applied to the superior tenure holders in the neighbouring district of Sylhet thereby infusing feudal element in the ryotwari settlement in the district.

"A cultivator's holding is considered large if it exceeds one *hal* or 5 acres of land and a small if less than 6 *khiyar* or 2.5 acres. One pair of oxen can cultivate 6 or 7 *khiyars* or about 3 acres of land. But the common plough cattle in Cachar are buffaloes, a pair of which can cultivate as much as one *hal*. The latter quantity, therefore, may be regarded as the area of local plough and the holding upto the extent would

render its possession as well off as a common shopkeeper and would place him in a better position than the labourer on a money wage of Rs. 8/- per month. There can be no doubt that the condition of Cachar cultivators is of comparative affluence. There is waste land in abundance close to their villages which they can take up from the government on easy terms and their rate of assessment on land already under tillage are not excessive. Natural calamities are infrequent and have never occurred within the memories of the present generation on such a scale as to effect general harvest. Each family grows sufficient to supply its modest want and the surplus finds a ready sale among the coolies of tea garden. As a consequence indebtedness was rare and the native of the district are unwilling to work for others even at the high wages offered by the planters. The *mirasdars* almost universally cultivate their holdings with their own hand. It is calculated that only about 1/8th of the land was sub-let to agricultural labour called *Paikashthis*.<sup>39</sup>

The general census of 1872 reflected the population pattern of the district as in the following table.<sup>40</sup>

District	area in sq. mile	No. of villages, mauzas, township	No. of houses	Total population	Average according to census				
					Persons/sq. mile	Village, mauzas township per sq. mile	Persons per village, mauzas township	Houses/sq. mile	Persons per sq. mile
Cachar	1285	389	37311	205027	160	0.30	527	29	5.5

In 1871-72, a regular census of the settled portion of the district i.e., an area of 1285 sq. miles was taken up by the order of the government. Cachar was never fully surveyed and the previous estimate of total area i.e., 5000 sq. miles included much of the mountaneous part—both North and south which did not fall under the regular jurisdiction of the Deputy Commissioner. Hunter mentions, the revenue survey of Dave conducted during the season of 1864-65, 1865-66, 1867-68 returned a total area of 1,102,421 acres or 1722 sq. miles out of



which only 147, 917 acres were under cultivation. But according to the recent survey in 1875-76 the

i) Estimated area of the district	...	3750 sq. mile
ii) Cultivated area	...	451 sq. mile
iii) Waste but cultivable	...	2500 sq. mile
iv) Waste but uncultivable	...	799 sq. mile <sup>41</sup>

But in "1875-76 about 200070 acres of cultivable waste were sold in free simple or leased for a term of years."<sup>42</sup>

It further mentions:

i) Total assessed area	...	313,362	or 490 sq. miles
ii) Under cultivation	...	257,285	acres
iii) Grazing land	...	15,000	acres
iv) Cultivable waste	...	41,077	acres

and the gross amount of assessment was Rs. 158,888 giving an average per acre of 9 annas 10 pie (0.66). Again in another portion of the report, out of the total cultivated area 246800 acres are conjecturally assigned to rice & 32885 acres to tea. The aggregate area under other crop was almost negligible.<sup>43</sup>

Hunter also mentioned that about 161 European land holders were registered on the rent rolls of the district. It was difficult to estimate the comparative number of Hindus and Mohammadans proprietors, because all were indiscriminately included in the same lease. However, the Deputy Commissioner believed that about 5/8th of the total number of the *mirasdars* or superior tenure holders were Musalmans and the remaining 3/8th included Hindus, Manipuries, and other low castes. The number of absentee landlords were insignificant.<sup>44</sup>

### Changes in the Demographic Structure

By 1850 tea plantation was introduced in Cachar which ultimately brought radical changes in the district. The tea plantation brought huge number of people from outside and due to the opening of the market as well as growing trade and commerce pegged up the value of the land. According to the Assam Administrative Report 1875-76, out of the total area of 208,488

acres taken up for tea in Cachar, 82, 759 acres or 29.6% were fit for cultivation.<sup>45</sup>

The tea plantation had opened up the gate of Cachar for new settlers and by 1911, about 1/3rd of the inhabitants of the plains of Cachar were either coolies or ex-coolies.<sup>46</sup> The availability of land also had reached saturation point.

Since the assumption of power by the British, Cachar witnessed great extension of the rice cultivation. The increase of the native population and the demand for foodgrain among the immigrant labour in the tea garden has caused the reclamation of jungle land and the area under cultivation kept growing annually. As the food business became profitable there appeared scramble for occupations as much cultivable land as possible. The following table illustrates the increase in the areas:

Year	Total area under cultivation
1830	29000 acres
1841-42	70000 acres
1858	147917 acres <sup>47</sup>
1875-76	257285 acres

Thus within fortysix years cultivation has increased nearly nine fold and this was due to the steady extension of rice cultivation.

On the other hand the population had also increased from 50000 (1837) to 205027 (1872) within 35 years.

The population of the plains of Cachar increased from 414781 in 1901 to 470167 in 1911, i.e., 13.35%. In Silchar subdivision population increased by 12.33% and that of Hailakandi by 16.88%. The Manipuries were the second most numerous community and important race inhabiting Cachar. In 1872 about 6093 Manipuries were inhabiting the district.<sup>48</sup> The Manipuries of Cachar were purely agriculturist and for many years they had pioneered the cultivation. Only the Manipuri settlers obtained grant of jungle lands, which was revenue free for 1000 days. They used to clear the jungle and cultivate the land until first revenue demand was made. They used to leave their holdings after a stay for few years when they realised that the fertility of the soil is decreasing. They left those place in search of fresh piece of jungle. The abandoned land

was occupied by new settlers. The Manipuri, however, discovered their fallacy and instead of abandoning in future they had permanently settled down.

### Emerging Types of Tenancy

Although the general prosperity of the Cachar district had been reported, the different reports show that absentee landlordism, sub-tenancy and superior rights on lands by the *mirasdars*, money-lending and sub-letting of lands started emerging when different classes of peasant also started appearing.

W.L. Scot had made the settlement of Cachar in 1917-18 and his final report testify that broadly three classes of tenants emerged in the district—*Paikasth*, *Raiyat* and *Bhagidars*. A *Paikasth* was a tenant who had homestead of his own and had taken surplus land on rent from another landholder. *Raiyat* was a cultivator who rented both homestead and cultivable land of land-holder. *Bhagidar* was a cultivator who rented only the surplus land of landholders by paying rent in kind in terms of fixed amount of paddy. A large number of coolies who were brought from outside Cachar for tea plantation at a later date came out of the garden and reclaimed jungle land. These coolies were hard working and willing to take up any kind of work.<sup>49</sup> Many of these coolies acquired considerable degree of wealth and large holding of land in different parts of district by abstemiousness and a strict attention to business in agriculture and money lending. The ex-coolies settlements were found all over the district, particularly in the sub-mountainous villages and in *chatla* group where climatic condition seemed to require a hardier stock than the indigenous Bengali. Re-settlement figures show that ex-coolies held 26577 acre of land as land owners and 10805 acre as sub-tenants. The rest of the land was held mainly by the natives except in Katigorah, where a large number of persons were living across in the Sylhet district.

W.L. Scot reported that the growth of tenancy at comparative rates in the district was a matter of the last forty years. Before 1878-82 it was stated that all tenants remained as such at their own will and at that of their landlords because at that

time waste land was easily available for cultivation. The situation started drifting from the last settlement, where it was seen that when the waste land of the district had been brought under cultivation the tenancy started growing. It was estimated that 20% of the total cultivated area was sub-let and the proportion was highest in the outlying areas and lowest around densely populated area of the district.<sup>50</sup> The outlying areas were inaccessible and swamps. The absentee landlords did not go to these places to settle. They had no other way but sub-let the land because there were enough surplus lands. On the other hand the people having no land found that to engage themselves in cultivation was easy in outlying area. The thickly populated areas were already settled and situated near the town and commercial centres. In old places almost all of them were the cultivators and had land but not enough surplus to sub-let and secondly being nearer to centres of trade and commerce, secondary source of income was possible. There was no taker for sub-letting in the old thickly populated older *parganas*.

Scot commented,

"there is great deal of truth in the description of the disabilities under which tenants suffer. There are other features, of the situation which render it very doubtful whether any tenancy legislation is at present necessary. The number of true tenants, i.e., persons absolutely dependent on hired land for a living is very small, most of them 'under tenants' are men with land of their own though it may be of a small amount who cultivate the surplus land of others. These men are not so helpless as the petition represents. True tenants hold land under big landholders. I have not found evidence of any harshness of treatment which might be expected to result from the unlimited power of the landlords. Though eviction was possible, it is difficult to practise eviction from any large area. The sub-tenants of smaller *mirasdars* generally have an understanding according to local custom that the payment of rent depends on the growth of crop. My conclusion is that at present owing to the small number of truly dependent tenant and the good treatment which they usually receive, there is no need for protective legislation but the situation may develop unfavourably in the future."<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand, the British government's various efforts not only led to extension of cultivation, but also increased the land revenue demand and collection. If we consider the collection and expenditure as shown below we find that the British government increased their income tremendously.<sup>52</sup>

Year	Total Revenue	Expenditure	Balance
1830-31	£2669.65	£ 2072.25 (on civil admn.)	(+) 597.40
1860-61	£18850.165	£ 9254.165	(+) 9566.00

#### Revenue and Expenditure<sup>53</sup>

Year	Increase of revenue	No. of estate	No. of owners	Average payment per estate	Average payment of each proprietor
1843-44	£ 4314	6742	35272	125.100d	25.5 d
1850-51	£ 5679	7156	38569	155.100d	25.11d
1870-71	£14721	7944	77323	11751 d	35.9 d
1875-76	£15888				

Thus within forty years since the British undertook the administration of the area, the revenue of Cachar had multiplied itself.

The table illustrates the fact that the land was widely distributed in the district and this had also led to the tendency of sub-tenancy. According to an estimate about £ 36711 was earned as land revenue and the net expenditure on civil administration was of £ 25291 leaving a surplus of £ 11420.

By the first quarter of the 20th century the presence of sub-tenancy became quite apparent in the Barak Valley. However, the sub-tenancy was noticed as early as during the settlement period of 1878-82. Initially, the tenants used to enjoy advantageous position. But with the gradual growth of population the sub-tenancy got extended to new areas. Most of the tenants were not true tenants in a sense that they own some land and besides that they cultivate the land of others. There were three classes of tenants in the district of Cachar and the land was sub-let in terms of *keyar* and *paikasthi keyar* which contained a little over 16 *katta*, being 2/3rd of the standard *keyar* of one

*bigha four katta* and five *chatak*. But in Cachar the landlord did not adhere to uniform measurement.<sup>54</sup>

Besides this, W.L. Scot and R.S. Sharma the settlement officer of 1917-18 and 1948-53 have recorded sub-tenancy in their respective reports. In 1917-18 large area of cultivable waste was reclaimed and by and large these areas were appropriated by the landlords. Many of these landlords could not cultivate their land on their own and resorted to practise of sub-tenancy. According to Scot's settlement report, approximately 20% of the total cultivated land on the average was under sub-tenancy (see Table I).<sup>55</sup> Scot conceded that the settlement figures failed to bring forth the actual magnitude of sub-tenancy in Cachar and strong reason to believe this was the census figures, which show for the same period an increase in the total number of rent payee from 80256 to 140988, an increase of 74.8%. It seems that the fact of sub-tenancy was suppressed. Though reasons for this suppression are difficult to find out but perhaps there was no true tenants and they did not want to see themselves as tenants. The tenants of Hailakandi sub-division submitted a petition to Scot which said that the number of the tenants of Cachar was small and none but the specially unfortunate lived as tenant.<sup>56</sup>

The concealment of the tenancy became more apparent, when R.S. Sharma made the settlement for the period starting from 1948. The statistics related to sub-letting indicated sharp decline in sub-letting in comparison to the earlier settlement made by W.L. Scot, R.S. Sharma himself disputed the facts and said,

"all groups show a remarkable decrease in sub-tenancies which may be contrary to facts. In fact there is nothing to conclude a decrease of sub-tenancy from the figures of the last re-settlement when population has increased by about 50% in the district and area expanded by the opening of new area since the last re-settlement. It is absurd to think that the extent of sub-tenancy has decreased."<sup>57</sup>

In fact no record of tenancy rights was prepared and the tenants were duped by the designing elements who had attempted to acquire land by virtue of long possession. The landlords were quite apprehensive of such design and did not leave any record.<sup>58</sup> Besides the designing elements, the

landlords were also apprehensive of the Tenancy act of 1935 and 1953 and the Adhjar Protection and Regulation act of 1948. Thus it can be safely said that approximately 20% or more of the total cultivated land was under sub-tenancy. The settlement reports, interestingly, pointed out the practise of sub-tenancy in the outlying and thinly populated *parganas* namely, Jalalpur, Gumra, Chatla, and Vernerpur. This is perhaps because of the fact that outlying areas had no source of sufficient labour supply and the tenants were encouraged to migrate to these areas.<sup>59</sup>

The rent was exorbitant in the settled areas and fixed at the sweet will of the landlords. The oppression of the tenant was rampant. The tenants of Hailakandi sub-division complained to W.L. Scot that there was no standard measurement of the *nal* with which the lands were measured.<sup>60</sup> Some of the landlords used six cubit *nal*, six and half cubit or seven cubit *nal*. If the *raiya*ts (tenants) raised any objection, they were evicted. On the other hand, the rent was either Rs. 3/- or Rs. 3.50 a *paikasthi keyar* and was gradually increasing. The declining productivity of the soil further compounded the problem of burdened tenants.<sup>61</sup> The landlord now did not hesitate in evicting the tenants. This indicates a complete reversal of the condition of the initial periods, when the tenants were enjoying liberal terms. The landlords generally evicted them only in the month of April, May or June, when the tenants were not likely to get other's land.<sup>62</sup> The tenants appealed to W.L. Scot for standardising the *nal* fixing the rate of rent and for giving them the occupancy rights.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, the situation did not vary much when R.S. Sharma wrote his settlement report in 1955. The *paikasthi keyar* varied from locality to locality according to the will of the landlords. In the Hailakandi sub-division where the demand for the land was highest, it was 2/3rd of standard *keyar*.<sup>64</sup> Even the quantum of rent widely varied from area to area. In Silchar group of *parganas* the rent was Rs. 8/- to Rs. 10/- per *paikasthi keyar*, which was 9/10th of a *bigha*. In the flourishing villages, the rent below Rs. 8/- was not known. In Lakhipur, Udharbond and Borkhola *pargana* the sub-letting was rare and the rate was Rs. 8/- per *bigha*. In the Bazar area the rent was Rs. 20/- per *bigha*. In the Banraj group there was no uniformity. The rent for rice land ranged

from Rs. 5/- to Rs. 8/- per *paikasthi keyar*. In the Chatla group for rice land a uniform rate of Rs. 4.50 to Rs. 5/- a *bigha* was imposed. However, the tea gardens were found to charge nominal rent of Rs. 0.25 per *keyar* from their labour force. In the Katigorah group the rent for rice land varied from Rs. 4/- to Rs. 6/- per *paikasthi keyar*.<sup>65</sup> In some of the groups, sometimes rates were increased fantastically upto Rs. 25/- per *bigha*.<sup>66</sup>

On the whole, the rates of rent paid by the tenants till 1942 were higher than the last re-settlement by atleast 33 per cent. The average rate of rent had increased by more than 100 per cent in the settlement of 1948 than Scot's settlement. This was enormous, burdensome and had no justification, because it was equivalent to 5 times the government revenue and, yet, surprisingly no case for these illegal exactions of rent, above the maximum prescribed was filed in the court under section 64 of Assam Temporarily settled District Tenancy Act.<sup>67</sup> Obviously, the tenants feared to antagonise the landlords because they were in dire need of land for their livelihood.<sup>68</sup>

The government of Assam also conceded the exorbitant rate of rent levied on the tenant.

"The revenue Minister of Assam Bishnu Ram Medhi stated in the Assam Assembly"... "as a matter of fact we have received large number of complaints and on enquiry we have found that exorbitant rate of rent in kind is released from the tenants and on refusal they are evicted and great hardship is caused."<sup>69</sup>

Similar evidence we get from the confidential report of the intelligence branch of the Assam Government. The report cited a printed leaflet published by Dwijendralal Sengupta, Bhagirath Singh and others, which were found in circulation in the district. The leaflet demanded that tenants should pay only 1/3rd share of the produce of land to the land owner and it called for stopping the rent more than 5 times of the government revenue.<sup>70</sup>

Though it is difficult to find the exact number of tenants, particularly in the absence of record as well as any case which could reveal the required information. But on the basis of the observations made by W.L. Scot and R.S. Sharma, we can conclude that the practise of sub-tenancy was prevalent despite Cachar being included in the *Ryotwari* areas. The



**Table I**  
**Position of Sub-Tenancy of Resettlement of 1917-18**

Pargana	Total cropped area excluding tea (bigha)	Area sublet (bigha)	% sublet to cropped area	Last settlement
Katigorah	15551	2542	16.35	19
Haritkar	7143	1863	26.08	19
Lebharputa	5214	1127	21.61	20
Jalalpur	7633	3975	52.08	34
Gumra	12904	4523	39.05	37
Kalain	14976	4499	30.04	25
Phulbari	8767	988	11.28	15
Jatrapur	19351	1516	7.83	12
Bikrampur	25891	5042	19.47	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>117430</b>	<b>26078</b>	<b>22.20</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>SILCHAR GROUP</b>				
Borkhola	24073	4144	17.21	8
Jainagar	13510	1310	9.70	4
Rajnagar	11591	257	2.22	6
Barakpar	50325	1607	3.19	5
Sunapur	40000	1662	4.06	9
Udharband	38542	5218	13.54	11
Banskandi	19347	3449	17.83	11
Rupaibali	24697	1648	6.67	13
Lakhipur	41211	5525	13.41	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>264196</b>	<b>24820</b>	<b>9.39</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>CHATLA GROUP</b>				
Chatla Haor	41884	15251	36	12
<b>BANRAJ GROUP</b>				
Banraj	79553	11504	14.46	15
Bhuban hill	4533	1144	25.24	62
Davidsonabad	43678	6800	15.57	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>127764</b>	<b>19448</b>	<b>15.22</b>	<b>--</b>
<b>HAILAKANDI GROUP</b>				
Hailakandi	124522	1561	10.09	15
Saraspur	32464	7186	22.14	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>156986</b>	<b>19747</b>	<b>12.58</b>	<b>--</b>
<b>VERNERPUR GROUP</b>				
Vernerpur	64418	17194	26.69	27

**Table II**  
**Statement Showing Sub-Tenancy Pargana by Pargana 1948-53.**

Pargana	Total net area cropped	Area sublet	% of area sublet to cropped area	% of tenancy to cropped area in last re-settlement
Katigorah	18674	335	1.79	16.35
Haririkar	7213	503	6.97	26.08
Leberputha	5562	537	9.65	21.61
Jalalpur	8263	1139	13.78	52.08
Gumra	13104	1428	10.90	39.05
Kalain	16617	751	4.52	30.04
Phulbari	10199	143	1.40	11.22
Jatrapur	20056	268	1.34	7.83
Bikrampur	28769	1945	6.76	19.47
<b>Total</b>	<b>128457</b>	<b>7094</b>	<b>5.49</b>	<b>22.20</b>
<b>SILCHAR GROUP</b>				
Borkhola	20981	1887	8.99	17.21
Rajnagar	13759	1275	9.27	9.70
Joynagar	14170	661	4.66	2.22
Barakpar	59695	4213	7.06	3.19
Sonapur	47804	1156	2.42	4.06
Udharbond	34780	4047	11.64	13.54
Banskandi	18880	1431	7.58	17.83
Rupaibali	29675	1863	6.28	6.67
Lakhipur	47944	5488	11.45	13.41
<b>Total</b>	<b>287688</b>	<b>22021</b>	<b>7.65</b>	<b>9.39</b>
Chatla	37263	5638	14.86	36.00
<b>BANRAJ GROUP</b>				
Banraj	87821	5865	6.68	14.46
Bhuban hill	3235	130	4.02	25.24
Davidsonabad	51770	4626	8.74	15.57
<b>Total</b>	<b>142826</b>	<b>10521</b>	<b>7.37</b>	<b>15.22</b>
<b>HAILAKANDI GROUP</b>				
Hailakandi	138300	7506	5.43	10.00
Savaspur	38022	2853	7.50	22.14
<b>Total</b>	<b>176322</b>	<b>10359</b>	<b>5.88</b>	<b>12.58</b>
Vernerpur	68106	5902	8.67	26.69
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>840662</b>	<b>61390</b>	<b>7.30</b>	<b>15.90</b>

tenants were exploited to the core. The helplessness of the tenants created a bitterness against the landlords and sowed the seed of future agitation or movement which we shall see in the subsequent chapters.

### ENDNOTES

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4. R.S. Sharma, 'Final Report on the Re-Settlement of Cachar, 1948-54, p. 10-11.
5. Final Report 1917-18, W.L. Scot, p. 3.
6. Census of India, 1931 (J.H. Hutton, Census Supdt.) Vol. II, Summary figure for the district, table XX pp. 572-73.
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9. *Ibid.*
10. Record from the Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Cachar.
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16. J.B. Bhattacharjee, 'Khel: Roots of Agricultural Common wealth of Cachar', p. 2, *Journal of Assam University*, Vol. I, January, 1996.
17. Baden-Powell, *The Land System of British India*, p. 436.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. Baden-Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 437.
21. W.W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 363.
22. G. Verner's report on the revenue system of the district of Cachar dated, 10th May 1853 (ed.) D. Dutta, *Cachar district Record*, p. 208. Here Kulba is about 5 acres of land.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Ranjit Sen, *Understanding Indian History*, pp. 86-87.
25. A.K. Banerjee, *Eastern Frontier and British India*, p. 440.
26. Baden Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 434.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 435.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 437.
29. Lt. Thuiller's report No. 101, dt. 5th Nov. 1842, cited by E.R. Lyon, Supdt., Cachar in his letter No. 23 dt. 10th June 1843 to the Commissioner, Dacca Div. See D. Dutta *op. cit.*, pp. 119-20.
30. E.R. Lyon, the Superintendent of Cachar's letter No. 111 dt. 25th Sept. 1844 addressed to the Commissioner, Dacca Division, see also D. Dutta, *Ibid.*, p. 127.

31. The Assam Land Revenue Manual Vol. I, 1965, pp. CXXXIIICXXXIV
32. *Ibid.*, p. CXXXIV
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*, p. CXXXV, the special cases were related largely to Tea cultivation.
35. Baden Powell, *op. cit.*, p. 437.
36. *Ibid.*
37. W.W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 421.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 422.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 412.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 378. Hunter regreted that he did not have the census compliations of the Cachar district and had to rely on the general census.
41. The census of 1872 was applied to an area of only 1285 sq. miles. Hunter *op. cit.*, p. 410.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*, p. 411.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 425.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 445.
46. W.L. Scot, *Final Report on the Re-Settlement of Cachar for the year 1917-18*, p. 3.
47. As per the land survey of 1858.
48. W.W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 381.
49. Report of W.L. Scot, 1917-18, p. 12.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 17
52. W.W. Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 445-46
53. *Ibid.*, p. 446.
54. Report of W.L. Scot, 1917-18, p. 18, see also report of R.S. Sharma, p. 42.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
57. R.S. Sharma, *ibid.*, p. 30.
58. *Ibid.* He writes elsewhere that in the settlement of (1949-55) also all efforts were made to record the partition on account of hostility between the landlords and the tenant partly on account of a section of designing persons making capital out of the situation goading the tenants into the pervert action of giving exaggerated account of their tenancies and their particulars could not be recorded.
59. W.L. Scot, p. 17.
60. *Ibid.*
61. W.L. Scot, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.*
64. Report of 2nd Re-settlement of R.S. Sharma, 1948-55, p. 42.
65. R. Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Ibid.*
69. Proceedings of Assam Legislative Assembly of the session held on Friday, 12th March, 1948.
70. Abstract of intelligence report, Shillong, Saturday, the 1st December, 1946, para 2551, p. 434.